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THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

MISSIONS

Missions and the World War

Well might the religious leaders of the present show concern for the missionary enterprise. In the abundance of literature which is being issued on the subject there is frequently evidenced a determined effort to show the bright side of a dark cloud. A suggestive treatment of the subject appears under the name of Henry Churchill King in the *American Journal of Theology*, January. In this treatment we are told that the world-crisis which has been precipitated by the war suggests that the race's real trouble is that there has been no consistent and radical trial of the spirit and principles of Christ in the whole realm of human life. The secret of the race-bungling having been thus disclosed he proceeds to say that Christian missions reveal Christianity at its best and purest. In the missionary effort the task looms large in terms of humanity, the principles of life must be such as to overreach any single class or race, and the conception of God is to be greater than any tribal possession and find its unifying significance in the Father of all men. But when the author asserts that Christianity is to assume principles which give it the right to be supreme and final for the entire human race he is likely to find himself in disagreement with the leading scholars of the history of religions.

The body of the article is given over to a treatment of eight "things which cannot be shaken." Nothing can save civilization but thorough permeation with the truly Christian spirit. This foregoing statement is made in the hope of making clear to the reader what is needed to save a civilization from just such a situation as that into which our own civilization has tumbled. But, while the phraseology is commonplace,

most readers will find themselves at sixes to understand just what is meant by that obscure phrase, "truly Christian spirit." In this same connection he refers to "the will which has decided to follow the good" in much the same sense, although it obviously is not quite synonymous.

Another of "the things which cannot be shaken" is the inescapable grip of the laws of God in the life of nations as well as of individuals. This is a law, the writer maintains, the universality of which is being witnessed to by all the belligerent nations. Among the remaining items that are enumerated one of the most significant is that the missionary aim cannot be harmonized with a selfish exclusive patriotism or nationalism. The missionary is seeking the true reign of Christ in all the world and in all the departments of life. But such a motive has found itself confronted by a very different ideal which has been intensified by the war, namely, a new respect for nationalism. Out of these conflicts of Christian nations there have arisen desperate antagonisms which are manifestly not after the mind of Christ. This situation makes a true Christian conquest of the world impossible. In the face of this setting of facts what is needed is a clear recognition of the fact that in all humanity's greater ideals and aims there can be no national or racial boundaries, accordingly, the writer makes an appeal for universal co-operation, which can be universal just because there is appreciative respect for all that each nation and race has to offer.

The crisis through which the church is now passing will result in a missionary reconstruction on an undreamed-of scale. Co-operation among all the forces of

righteousness is demanded in a degree so far hardly imagined. Such co-operation cannot rise without an immensely greater emphasis upon the ethical and social elements of the Christian message in every relation and realm of life. This demand is reinforced by the recognition that one of the deeply disappointing things in this

war is that the churches of Christ have on the whole counted so little for international good-will. To attain the end desired it is necessary that there shall be such a unifying of the Christian forces in work as the world has never yet seen; and this must be based upon a new sensitiveness to the values of alien peoples.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Beliefs in American Colleges

Frequently we are told that religion is a dead letter among college students; but Carl Holiday, writing in the *Hibbert Journal*, January, interprets the situation quite otherwise. His competency to venture an opinion is based on fifteen years' experience in the classroom and an acquaintance with college men in ten states. A definite distinction, he says, is to be made between the college men and the college women, namely, that the women are not so keenly alive to the vital changes which are being wrought in religious thought. In this article the writer is concerned solely with the religious beliefs of the men. Anyone familiar with the college men of today is aware of the disposition on the part of students to expect to find that the preaching heard in the churches does not square with the conclusions of the laboratories and the expressions of the poets and philosophers in the university library. Mr. Holiday admits that there was once a time when the preacher's voice was the voice of God, but he is disposed to feel that to this generation of college students it is the voice simply of a man whose intellect, training, knowledge of the laws of life, and ability to interpret are no better than those of the students themselves. The resultant of all this is that the student strikes out for himself in matters of belief. This precipitates views of God, immortality, the Bible, and prayer which are more or less peculiar to them-

selves. In discussing the student's attitude toward God the writer says he has never found an infidel among them; they are inclined to allow their thought to be fashioned by science and to agree with the Leontes that all science must take for granted a First Great Cause, and you may call it God or what you will. The conception which the student has of the Bible is said to be such as would surprise many pessimistic preachers; numerous college men appreciate the Bible as a keen, deep, subtle, and beautiful expression, and many books of the Bible as a marvelous expression of the human heart. But when it is said that the book is infallible truth from cover to cover the young men take issue, for such a position seems incredible to upperclassmen who have done any original research in sociology, history, and literature. The writer tells us also that these college students are forming conceptions of prayer which are a long way from the views held by Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather. Scientific training has convinced many a college man that no prayer for the answering of which the natural laws of the universe would have to be modified will ever be answered. Yet these same men are eager to explain that prayer has an immense psychological value, and as a means of gaining a closer relationship with the Divine is a real source of potency.

The conclusion which Mr. Holiday draws is twofold, namely, that religion is far from being a dead issue in American